and investments of the ruling class. Matz sympathetically understands and explains the New Historicist concern to disclose “the power of literature” in crucial Renaissance texts as a response to the crisis in literary studies in the contemporary university: “Contemporary historicist criticism has found in the sixteenth century’s anxious defense of literature’s place an echo of its own concerns, and has responded by adopting rather than historicizing that defense” (p. 17). Although Matz cannot be expected to resolve the contemporary academic crisis, he provides something of a way forward, with a historicizing treatment that defines and respects the distinctive space that literature creates and sustains for itself. He might have followed through on this insight and given greater attention to how both Sidney and Spenser privilege poetry over history as more pleasurable, profitable, and truthful. Although, as a historicist critic, Matz could easily shrug this claim off as the text’s mystification of its own powers and processes, it might nevertheless be, in ways that strict historicism cannot account for, true. There is something in many of us who read and teach these texts which is left unsatisfied by a rigorously historicist analysis of the sort he proposes. Fortunately for Matz, and his readers, he is not quite as rigorously materialist in his analysis as he intends to be; he is too lovingly invested in these books and their writers. He not only historicizes with considerable sympathy the texts of Renaissance humanism that are the subject of his book, but humanizes the New Historicism that motivates and organizes his analysis.

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Alastair Bellany. *The Politics of Court Scandal in Early Modern England: News Culture and the Overbury Affair, 1603–1660*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. Pp. xvii, 312.

Sir Thomas Overbury, the intimate friend of James I’s favourite, the Earl of Somerset, died in the Tower of London in 1613. Two years later, the scandalous claims that he had been murdered, possibly with a poisoned enema, and that his murder had been procured by Lord Somerset and his wife Frances, spread across and beyond England. A series of trials took place, in the course of which four of the accused were executed, and the Somersets were sentenced to death, pardoned, and sent to live in a big house in the country. It was at this time that Simonds D’Ewes obtained a copy of an anagram which was making the rounds in manuscript: *Thomas Ouerburie — O! O! a busie murther*. Its execution was indeed, if all the stories are true, busy, and as anybody who has worked in the field is well aware, it kept the scribes busy too; Bellany cites well over a hundred manuscript sources, excluding the three- or four-hundred relevant manuscripts in the series of State Papers Domestic in the Public Record Office. The story continues to generate retellings, the most recent book-length ones being Beatrice White’s *Cast of Ravens* (1965) and Lady Anne Somerset’s *Unnatural Murder* (1997), both of which, as

their titles may suggest, emphasize its status as a mystery: was Overbury really murdered? Was either of the Somersets really guilty?

The Politics of Court Scandal is not, however, simply another warming and straining of this familiar murky soup. Alastair Bellany is not interested in telling his readers whether he thinks Lord Somerset was really innocent, or what he thinks might have been in the fatal enema. Instead, his admirable book investigates what contemporaries said about the affair, and how they said it — “how” being a matter not only of rhetoric but also of material texts. So, rather than rehearsing the familiar questions, Bellany raises questions about manuscripts like the one that supplied D’Ewes with his anagram: what anagrams, verses, copies of speeches, accounts of trials, and the like circulated in manuscript? In what physical forms did they circulate? What we can know about the oral transmission of related material? What were the political consequences of this circulation of scandal? The result is a rich and thoughtful analysis of the way in which early modern men and women experienced and reflected upon a particular *cause célèbre*, intended, in Bellany’s words, “to contribute to other ongoing efforts to rewrite early Stuart political history as cultural history” (p. 24).

So, after a first chapter which takes the story of Overbury and Somerset up to the first allegations of murder (and is by far the best available overview of Overbury’s life), comes an outstanding account of “News Culture and the Overbury affair,” which makes the bewildering corpus of Overbury-related manuscripts an object of inquiry, “evidence of the vitality and diversity of scribal news culture” (p. 91). This is followed by chapters on themes in the popular reception of the affair: the kinds of sins that were perceived to shape it; the ways in which it was seen specifically as connected to Popery; and the ways in which the conflicting demands of vengeance and mercy were seen as at play within it, particularly in James’s pardon of the Somersets. A final chapter traces the ways in which the affair was remembered in the years leading up to the English Civil War, and thereafter in the mid-seventeenth century and into the eighteenth and nineteenth. This all works beautifully: the book is elegantly written by a historian who has all the primary sources and a great range of secondary material at his fingertips, and whose thoughts on his subject are inspiringly acute and lucid. Anyone working on Overbury in the future — and there is a real need for a biography, and for editions of the miscellany, *Sir Thomas Overburies Wife*, and of Overbury’s letters and other authentic writings, which have never been gathered — will of course need to have Bellany’s book to hand. But *The Politics of Court Scandal* will also be indispensable reading for anyone interested in the reading and circulation of texts in early modern England. Adam Fox (whose *Oral and Literate Culture in England 1500–1700* appeared too late for Bellany to use it), Joad Raymond, and David Zaret have done important work in neighbouring fields; and there has also been excellent recent work on contemporary literary manuscript culture, such as that by Arthur Marotti, Harold Love, Henry Woudhuysen, and Peter Beal. But nobody has ever written so well and so extensively on the particular kinds of non-literary manuscript discussed by Bellany.

Rehearsing the names of some of Bellany's intellectual neighbours leads to the observation that most of them work in departments of English. Such was the case with Beatrice White, and is the case with David Lindley, the author of the only other critical study of any aspect of the Overbury scandal: *The Trials of Frances Howard: Fact and Fiction at the Court of King James* (1993). One of the great strengths of *The Politics of Court Scandal* is that it is an interdisciplinary study in the best tradition of the excellent series in which it appears, Cambridge Studies in Early Modern British History. Its being the work of a historian gives it special additional strengths: Bellany can write expertly, for instance, about Overbury's role in factional politics, or about the political agenda that shaped Sir Anthony Weldon's version of events. Perhaps there are one or two minor weaknesses to accompany these strengths; some texts, though not all, are modernized in quotation, which is a pity, and the material on Jacobean printed books suggests that bibliography is not one of the author's areas of greatest expertise. To these minor criticisms might be added the point that a more elaborate catalogue of the manuscripts listed in the bibliography would have been very helpful: for instance, the summary information that the Bodleian Rawlinson manuscripts C. 63 and C. 64 are both divorce and murder trial reports is fine, but it would be nice to be told something about their format and their relationship. That, however, may really be no more than a wish that Bellany had written a book much longer than this one: *The Politics of Court Scandal* is a splendid and enviable achievement.

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Bernhard Klein. *Maps and the Writing of Space in Early Modern England and Ireland*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave, 2002. Pp. xii, 235.

Early modern maps have intrigued generations of scholars and antiquarians alike. As Bernhard Klein so aptly points out, maps and other cartographic descriptions are complex sites of discursive negotiation. They speak to us about tensions between lived and symbolic space among those who own the land, those who work the land, and those who govern the land. By focussing on the various strategies for writing about and describing space in early modern England and Ireland, Klein demonstrates just how necessary it is to be mindful of these narratives of space and place.

Klein argues that changing methods of measuring and visualizing space in the sixteenth century affected the way people thought and wrote about the land. Lear's map, Spenser's *View of the Present State of Ireland*, and Drayton's *Poly-Olbion* all tell a story of the interconnectedness of the people living in their land and the ways of visualizing that space. All are connected to new emphases on measuring land and the new "map consciousness" of the sixteenth century. Klein is not arguing that maps in themselves created a spatial imagination; rather, he is demonstrating how an increasingly abstract way of describing space was used by